

Montgomery may spend \$2M more on driver training track

By Dena Levitz
Examiner Staff Writer

Montgomery County Council members today will vote on whether to spend \$2 million more on an upgraded driver training track for the county as well as \$400,000 on a plan to supply all county schools with defibrillators, as now required by state law.

The track is actually a work in progress that's going to cost the county \$7.14 million overall, legislative analyst Linda McMillan said. The \$2.13 million supplemental appropriation is on top of county funds already set aside. McMillan said crews ran into some problems with large amounts of rock, asbestos and water on the site while constructing a driving track.

"The county came to an agreement with the first contractor," she said. "They had to go back and redo the work, which came in at a higher cost." Originally it was thought that \$1.6 million would cover the extra costs, but as workers labored on, that estimate was deemed too low, McMillan said.

The purpose of the track — located behind the Public Safety Training Academy at Darnestown Road and Great Seneca Highway in Rockville — is to improve the driving skills of county employees often on the road.

McMillan said the old track is just that — old. The new track and state-of-the-art classroom and loading dock will be "much more comprehensive," she said.

As for the defibrillators, there's little doubt that the County Council will approve to purchase the medical devices. As of July 1, having the machines in schools became state law.

However, some school board members have expressed frustration that it was an unfunded mandate. According to legislative analyst Joan Planell, there was some disagreement initially about whether the legislation required one defibrillator at each school or whether one had to be on hand at actual school sporting events.

Planell said the decision was made to purchase two per school.

Brian Edwards, chief public information officer for Montgomery County Schools, said full athletic coaches and the athletic director have been trained on how to use the equipment. Spring coaches are being trained.

dlevitz@dcexaminer.com